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Arts Council

David Smith

David Smith 1906-1965

At The Tate Gallery
18 August - 25 September 1966

The Arts Council of Great Britain

3 Saw Head 1933 h. 17¼"

5 Leda 1938 h. 28½"

Preface and Acknowledgments

The present exhibition of David Smith's sculpture had been planned with the artist for over two years before his tragic death in May 1965. David Smith was a man of great pride and energy, and he looked upon a European tour of his work as both an honour and a challenge. He was enormously pleased and gratified by the invitation of The Tate Gallery to present his work in London, and the prospect of the exhibition was a great stimulus to him. It was to be his first opportunity to show a large body of his work in Europe, and, typically, he felt encouraged to produce 'bigger and better' sculptures, as he put it. Smith had always worked with incredible vitality, but in the last years of his life his productivity was greater than ever. Even with the fantastic pace at which he worked, there seemed an ease and grandeur in the way he achieved monumentality in his late work. He died at the height of his powers, and his death was a great loss to art.

The exhibition was prepared under the auspices of the International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, New York. On behalf of the International Council, I would like to express our appreciation to The Arts Council of Great Britain and The Tate Gallery for inviting the exhibition. Our warmest gratitude is also extended to Sir John Rothenstein, whose enthusiastic support of the exhibition aided immeasurably in its realization. Special thanks also go to Norman Reid, Director of The Tate Gallery, and to Gabriel White, Director of Art of the Arts Council.

We are particularly indebted to the late Frank O'Hara, until his recent death Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, who selected the exhibition and wrote the introduction to the catalogue. Mr. O'Hara's selection and his analysis of Smith's work are informed by his personal association with the artist and by close collaboration with him on two earlier exhibitions. The exhibition was organized by our Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions: S. Bradley Gillaugh, of the same department, supervised the packing and shipping, and Mrs. Anne Dahlgren Hecht and Miss Nadia Hermos prepared the catalogue and publicity material. William Berkson aided in research and documentation and prepared the artist's chronology and bibliography for the catalogue. He benefited from the cooperation of Miss Dorothy Dehner, Miss Helen Frankenthaler, and Mrs. Forrest A. Stewart, and the Archives of American Art, whose archivist, Garnett McCoy, and whose director then of the New Deal and the Arts Project, William Agee, made available unpublished source material.

We wish to record our warmest thanks to Clement Greenberg, Ira M. Lowe, and Robert Motherwell, executors of the estate of David Smith, for their invaluable cooperation. Stephen Weil, of the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, was especially helpful in providing information and facilitating arrangements for the exhibition. From his intimate knowledge of Smith's working methods, Leon Pratt, the artist's assistant in Bolton Landing, supplied much important information and advice, particularly as regards the assembly and safeguarding of the sculptures. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the generous cooperation of the lenders to the exhibition, who have made the extensive European tour possible. Their names are listed on page 36 of the catalogue.

We dedicate this exhibition to the memory of David Smith.

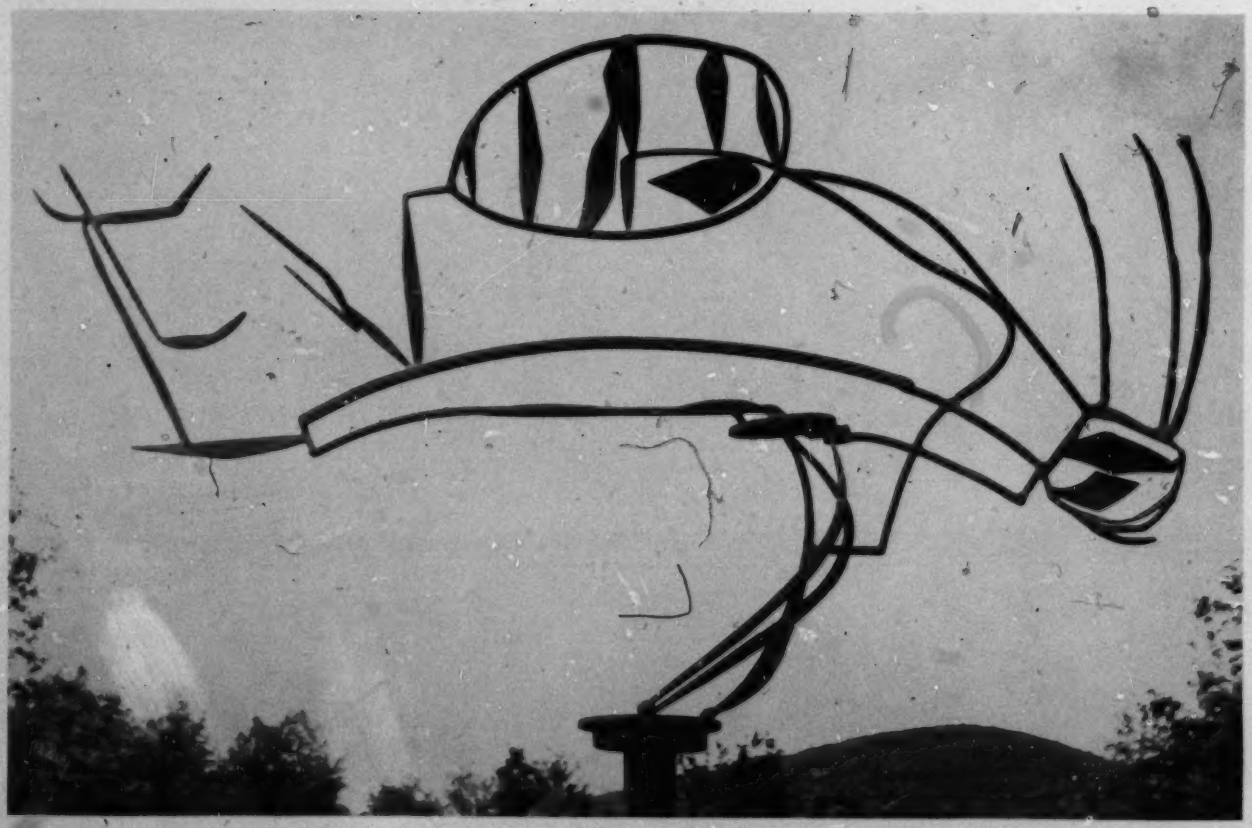
Waldo Rasmussen
Executive Director
Circulating Exhibitions
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The Arts Council is very glad to have the opportunity to present in London this exhibition of the sculpture of David Smith. We would like to record our gratitude to the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, New York and especially to Mr. Waldo Rasmussen, Executive Director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions. We wish to join with Mr. Rasmussen in thanking all those who have made the exhibition possible, and would like to add our thanks to the Director and Trustees of the Tate Gallery for lending us their galleries, and to Mr. Michael Brawne, M. Arch (MIT), A.A. Dip., A.R.I.B.A., who has planned the installation.

Gabriel White
Director of Art
Arts Council

Cover: 43 Cubi XIX 1964 h. 9'5"

6 Pillar of Sunday 1945 h. 30½"

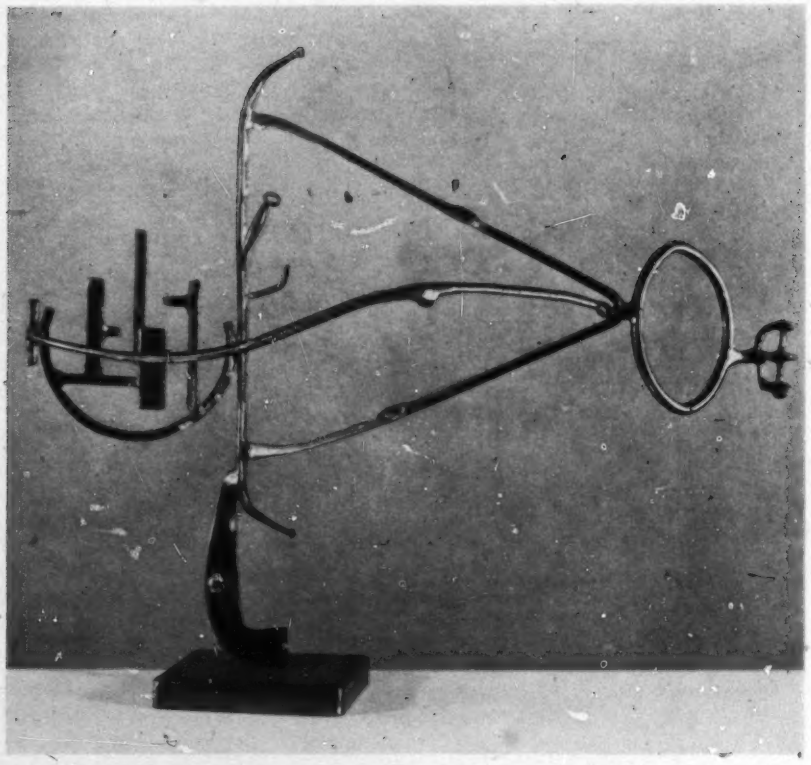


Introduction by Frank O'Hara

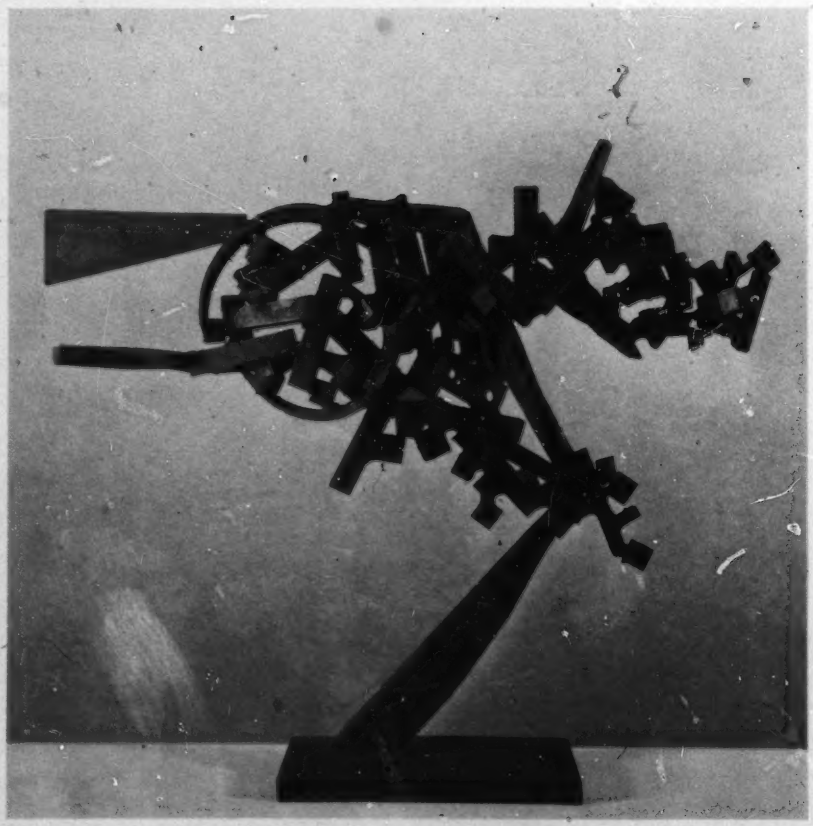
Smith was a very strong individualist and a very strong moral force in American art. He was considered by many to be the finest sculptor North America has produced; his death in 1965 in an automobile accident, as had Jackson Pollock's earlier, assumed for many a symbolic as well as tragic significance. A great and vital force, who like Pollock had given inspiration and aesthetic confidence to many other artists, was suddenly gratuitously removed from American art. Unlike Pollock, Smith died at the height of his productivity. In 1962, thanks to the accommodations of the Italian steel-producing company Italsider, S.p.A., and the workmen in its factory at Voltri, he had created twenty-six sculptures in thirty days, ranging in importance from superb to no less than significant. This same prodigal approach to sculptural ideas long fermenting within him continued when he returned from Italy, though naturally the same incredible pace was not maintained without the resources placed at his disposal by Italsider and the Italian government. But renewed freshness and vigour had come from this experience, and after the showing of the works at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, he returned to America to commence work on bronzes, on small painted steel pieces (the 'Menand' series), on the heroic stainless steel series called 'Cubi', on three huge *Wagons,* inspired by one he had made in the Voltri factory, and on the 'Voltri-Bolton' series, homages to the experiences and materials he had found so inspiring during his work in Italy. A week or so before he died, in the midst of preparations for an exhibition of the *Cubis* at the Los Angeles County Museum, he spoke of plans for one or two more 'gate-type' *Cubis,* a twenty-foot-high stainless steel *Tower* (its parts already laid out in a preliminary stage on the terrace of his workshop), and a *Zig* 'as big as a locomotive engine'.

This intense productivity was not, however, a late development in his career. Through the last twenty-five years of his life, the home, studio, and workshop at Bolton Landing, in the beautiful mountains above Lake George in northern New York State (near Canada), had gradually filled with sculptures which spilled out onto the hill on which the house was situated. In the early days he had begun to place sculptures outdoors in the fields for lack of indoor storage space and in order to study them in an unconfined and uncluttered area. Later he built cement pedestals in the fields where sculptures became a permanent feature, constantly replaced by newer work. With the hundreds of sculptures and paintings, and some three thousand drawings done in his solitude at night or when the weather prevented his working on sculptures, Bolton Landing became an extraordinary one-man museum. Since Smith did not begin to sell singificantly until relatively late in his career, and because of his desire to retain certain key works of each period for his two young daughters, the collection at Bolton Landing comprised a nearly complete survey of every aspect of his gifts and interests, as well as many intriguing diversions of his talents. Approaching it, one was struck by these brilliant and sophisticated stainless steel or painted structures, poised against the rugged hills and mountains, the lake in the distance, and the clouds, an assertion of civilized values not nearly so surprising in the confines of a gallery or museum, where, conversely, these same sculptures took on an aspect of rugged individualism and often an almost brutally forthright power. This was also true of Smith the man. At a party or a *vernissage* in New York he appeared a great, hulking, plain-spoken art-worker out of Whitman or Dreiser, neither impressed nor particularly amused by metropolitan 'lightweight' manners, somewhat of a bull in a china shop; at his home in Bolton Landing, with the same 'plain' manner, he prepared delicious meals himself, offered excellent wines and cigars, and spoke of his love of Renaissance music (particularly Giovanni Gabrieli) and Mozart and the writings of James Joyce, of his interest in the musical ideas of John Cage, in the dancing and choreography of Merce Cunningham, in the poetry of Dylan Thomas and William Carlos Williams, in the work of younger artists, particularly, as I remember, the sculptors John Chamberlain, Mark di Suvero, and Anthony Caro, and the painter Kenneth Noland, who had influenced his conception of the 'Circle' series. On walks he might discuss Egyptian and Sumerian art (his 'Zig' series was inspired by the latter and, I believe, also the 'Cubi' series), local politics (he had run for public office in Bolton Landing, but not been elected), the cult of Marilyn Monroe (with which he was in complete and enthusiastic sympathy), what you yourself had been working on recently and the difficulties involved. His compressed time-sense and his attention to both scholarly and immediate experiences is best expressed in his own words: 'The stream of time and the flow of art make it plain that no matter what the sculptor's declaration of individual vision he cannot conceive outside his time. His art conception takes place in dialectic order. The flow of art, the time of man, still places him within his own period, out of which he cannot fly, and within which

10 Australia 1951 w. 9'2"



13 Agricola XIII 1953 w. 41½"



19 Raven IV 1957 w. 32¾"

all other men exist. For no object he has seen, no fantasy he envisions, no world he knows, is outside that of other men. No man has seen what another has not, or lacks the components and power to assemble. It is impossible to produce an imperceptible work . . .

'Practically, the law of gravity is involved, but the sculptor is no longer limited to marble, the monolithic concept, and classic fragments. His conception is as free as the painter's. His wealth of response is as great as his draughtsmanship. Plastically he is more related to pagan cultures with directives from cubism and constructivism.' (bibl. 6)

As an affirmation of his contemporaneity, Smith found it only natural to range freely from Mesopotamia to Paris, from the Lascaux caves to the most recent painting exhibition of his friend Helen Frankenthaler, on each of which he had equally passionate opinions and insights.

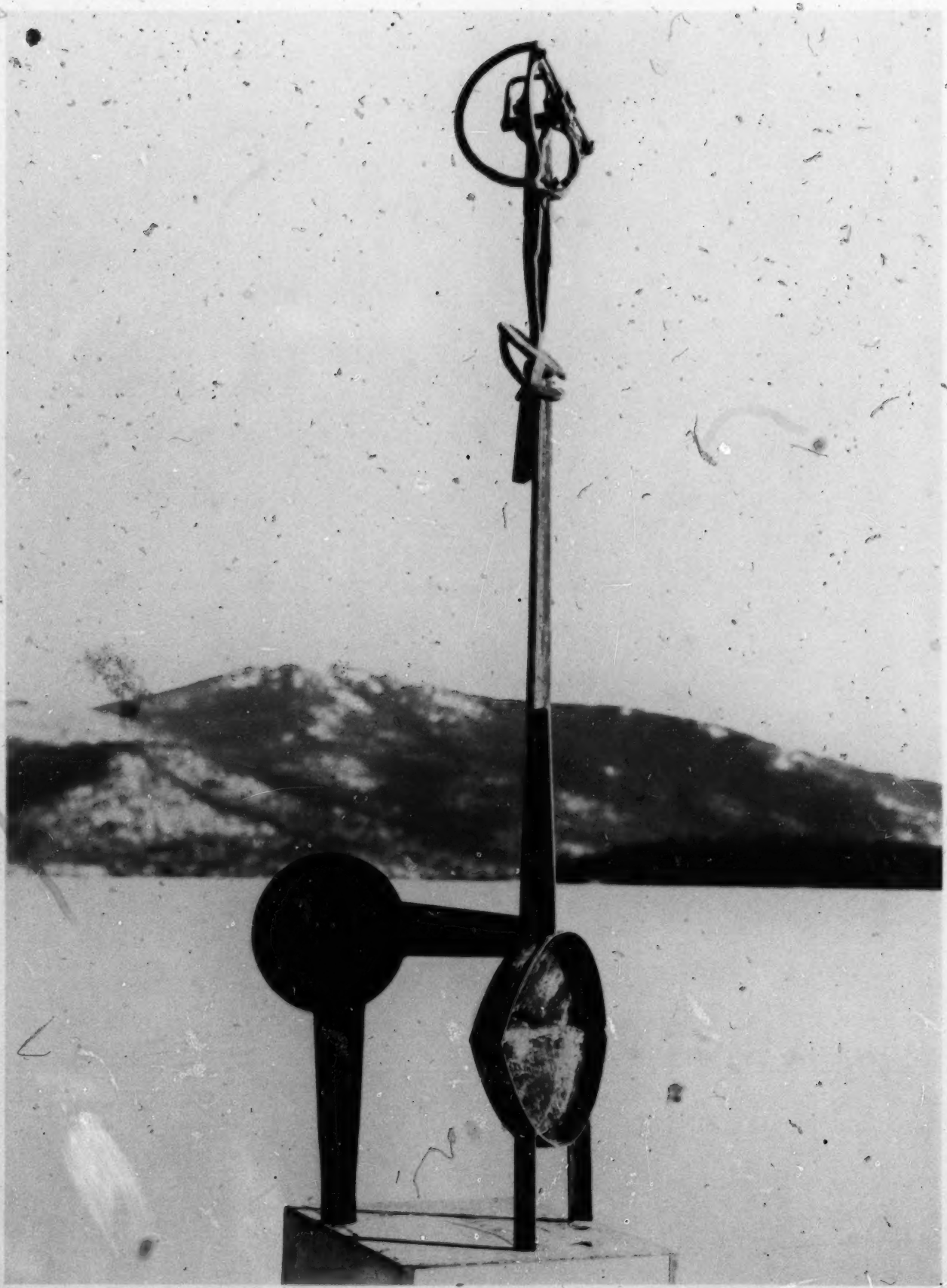
Smith was born in the Midwest in 1906. (Knowing that I was brought up in mountainous New England, he once told me that no one not born in the 'flat-lands' of the Midwest could appreciate the thrill that the mountains of Bolton Landing had for him or just how inspiring to him that space was.) He spent his youth in Decatur, Indiana, where 'everyone in town was an inventor. There must have been fifteen makes of automobiles in Decatur, Indiana; two blocks from where I lived there were guys building automobiles in an old barn. Invention was the fertile thing then . . .' (bibl. 16) He himself took an early interest in drawing and making signs and cartoons. He attempted to study art, but found the available curricula unsatisfactory.

At the age of nineteen he took a job in an automobile plant in South Bend, Indiana, thus beginning the development of skills which would later serve him as a sculptor and even direct his impulses toward technical innovation in steel sculpture, though at the time his inclination was growing toward being a painter.

A year later, after a brief stay in Washington, D.C., he moved to New York City, where he had the good fortune to meet the painter Dorothy Dehner, who was to be his first wife and who is now also a distinguished sculptor. Miss Dehner persuaded him to attend classes at the Art Students League. Once established as a student at the League, Smith encountered further good fortune in meeting the Czech abstractionist Jan Matulka, then teaching at the League, who introduced him to the works of Picasso, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Malevich and Lissitzky —since the general tenor of art instruction in America at the time was provincial and traditionalist, this encounter was of great importance. Shortly after, he became acquainted with painters who were to have a major role in the development of modern American art: John Graham and Jean Xceron, both liaisons with the avant-garde movements in Paris, and the New York-based painters, Stuart Davis, Arshile Gorky, and Willem de Kooning. All devoured the reproductions in *Cahiers d'art* and the texts in *transition,* thus turning away from the main impulses of American artistic thought of the period, saving that of the American expatriates.

Of this period, Smith wrote later: 'One did not feel disowned—only ignored and much alone, with a vague pressure from authority that art couldn't be made here. It was a time for temporary expatriates, not that they made art more in France, but that they talked it . . . Their concept was no more *avant* than ours, but they were under its shadow there and we were in the windy openness here. Ideas were sought as the end, but the result often registered in purely performance. Being far away, depending upon *Cahiers d'art* and the return of patriots, often left us trying for the details instead of the whole. I remember watching a painter, Gorky, work over an area edge probably a hundred times to reach an infinite without changing the rest of the picture, based on Graham's recount of the import in Paris on the "edge of paint". We all grasped on everything new, and despite the atmosphere of New York, worked on everything but our own identities.'

Smith was then a painter twenty-four years old. In the next year, 1931, he began to attach materials and then objects to the surface of his paintings, then constructed painted wooden objects. By 1932 he had begun making welded steel structures under the influence of reproductions of the works of Gargallo Picasso and Gonzalez, and the Russian Constructivists, retaining nevertheless his close relation to the flat surface of painting, the desire to incorporate colour in his emerging sculptural ethos, and a consuming interest in cubist aesthetics. 'While my technical liberation came from Picasso's friend and countryman Gonzalez, my aesthetics were more influenced by Kandinsky, Mondrian, and cubism. My student period was only involved with painting. The painting developed into raised levels from the canvas. Gradually the canvas became the



base and the painting was a sculpture. I have never recognized any separation except one element of dimension. The first painting of cave man was both carved line and colour, a natural reaction and a total statement . . . I do not recognize the limits where painting ends and sculpture begins.' This conviction continues into the painting of the late *Zigs*, and has everything to do with the burnishing of the stainless steel surfaces of the 'Plane' and 'Cubi' series, and the deliberate rusting of the *Voltri-Boltons*.

In addition to the influence of cubism and constructivism on Smith's work, the influence of surrealism cannot be underestimated. Unlike many other American artists, Smith seems to have gotten no romantic aura from surrealism and no social or intellectual glamour: rather, he took its ideas as a development out of Freud, a serious rather than fanciful one, and in the late 'thirties he utilized the surrealist vocabulary of forms (he was somewhat influenced at the time by Giacometti, Laurens, and Lipchitz) more as a means of social protest prompted by the years of the U.S. financial depression and the imminence of war than as an expression of any personal subconscious revelation. There are no frivolities and no self-indulgences in the works of this period, as there were in so many other American surrealist-inspired works: though not his most significant works, the *Medals for Dishonour* are extraordinary technically, and most of Smith's other sculptures of the period carry an indictment of war and Fascism which is marred in its expressive conviction only by a kind of plastic self-consciousness. While one does not doubt the sincerity of the sentiment, for the only time in Smith's career, one doubts the sculpture itself, in which his high purpose seems lowered to that of propaganda, a realization he himself reached later (see quote in Chronology for 1937). He went on instead to the exploration of his own identity and the discovery of his own imagery, perhaps here for the first time approaching the original impulse of surrealism, but by exploring the vocabularies of all the contemporary styles compatible with his aims. As the American critic Hilton Kramer wrote: '. . . as an artist he came into the inheritance of all the modernist impulses of European art simultaneously and without having to commit himself to one over another. Moreover, he came to this inheritance under the pressure of an extreme historical moment, when the structure of society seemed as much in question as the conventional forms of native American art. There is an analogue in Smith's refusal to choose one branch of modernism over another —to become purely a Cubist *or* a Surrealist *or* a Constructivist—with the anarchism of his social views. He chose to use whatever was useful to him . . .

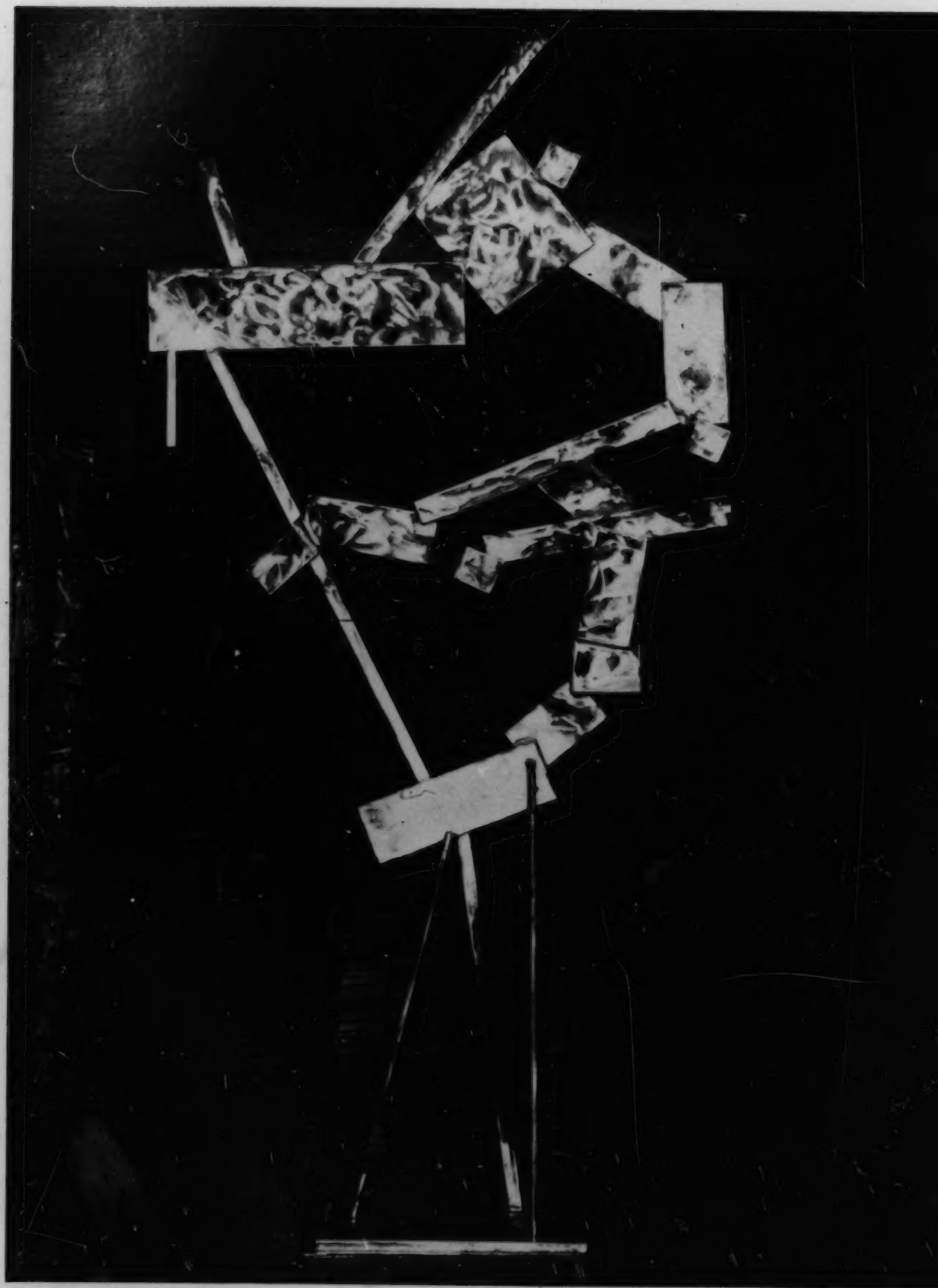
'One must add that such a freedom of choice was possible because European modernism itself had become fragmented and split into isolated impulses by the early 'thirties. Henceforth each artist was on his own in making whatever connections he could between the shattered fragments of the modern movement, and projecting out of them a new aesthetic possibility . . .

'In effect, he restored the Constructivist idea to the Cubist tradition, which had spawned it in the first place, and then threw in the Surrealism of his own generation for good measure. Once this synthesis was achieved, Smith moved freely in and out of figurative and non-figurative modes; heads, figures, landscapes, animal images, mythical and Surrealist fantasies, the symbolic anecdote and the purely formalistic conception were all available to his medium.' (bibl. 33)

This freedom, however, was not so simply won at first, and Smith in the 'thirties was obviously casting about for the particular qualities and significant values available to him in the modes which attracted his enthusiasm, and for the means to incorporate these modes in a single, organic vision of his own originating. He had his partisans as a young artist beginning to show publicly with increasing frequency, but like de Kooning, Gorky, and Pollock, he had few, and they were largely contained within the world of artists and a few astute collectors and critics. Restless in his ambition and in his intellectual curiosity, he was frequently accused of eclecticism, always a curious and confusing accusation when levelled at a young artist.

Because of this free-ranging exploration of form, style, and medium (his first sculpture was made in the Virgin Islands out of coral) and because of later developments in his own work and that of others, his three 'eclectic' heads of 1933, the *Agricola Head*, *Chain Head*, and *Saw Head* (Cat. Nos. 1, 2 and 3), may now be seen as works of marked originality and intelligence without any aura of hesitant experimentation; made from steel and 'found' steel parts, welded and painted, they establish clearly and quickly a discourse between Smith and his own environment and show how the formal innovations of Gonzalez and his Spanish environment encouraged Smith's self-searching dialogue with modern art. From the start, Smith took the clue from the Spaniards to lead him

15 History of Le Roy Borton 1956
h. 7'4"



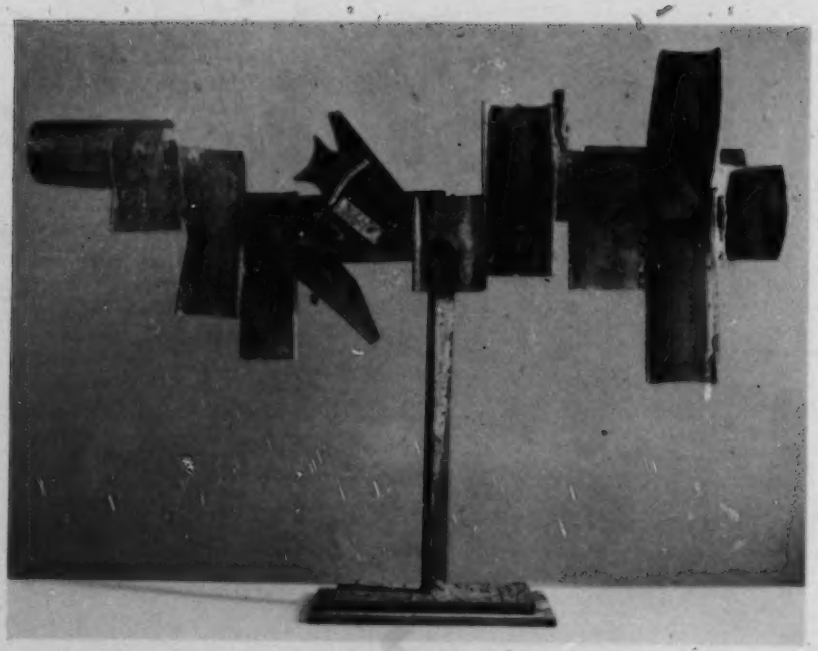
toward the full utilization of his factory skills as an American metalworker, especially in the aesthetic use of steel, glorifying rather than disguising its practicality and durability as a material of heavy industry. By incorporating found iron and steel parts from farm implements, and factory-ordered steel parts such as I-beams and concave discs in his work, Smith utilized his American milieu in much the same way that Spanish metal sculptors from Gargallo to Chillida and Chirino have utilized the traditional Spanish forging and wrought-iron techniques in developing their styles. Indeed, for all the technical delicacy and complexity of his symbolism in the late 'forties and the 'fifties, the 'drawing-in-air' of such works as *Agricola IX, Parallel 42,* and *O Drawing* (Cat. Nos. 12, 14 and 18), and the surcharged symbolic form-combinations of *Home of the Welder, Portrait of the Eagle's Keeper,* and *Pillar of Sunday* (Cat. Nos. 7, 8 and 6), Smith took genuine delight in the progress of industrial technology and the new techniques it made available to him for his work. This delight, however, did not spread to reproductive methods; perhaps because of his early experience as a painter, Smith insisted adamantly that each piece be unique, finished by the artist's hand. Working in bronze, he preferred the lost wax process and created the patina himself; in other media, no matter how much assistance he needed in the progress of the large works, the final painting or burnishing was his own. Like the self-made man, he had the self-taught artist's pride in personal completion of each event: 'Modern tools and method permit the expression of complete self-identity from start to finish. His [the contemporary sculptor's] work can show who he is, what he stands for, in many different ways and with all the fluency he desires, for every step is his own. His identity, pattern, and goal are shown in a qualitative unity, an integration stated in a manner not open to mind or hand before . . . This is, I believe, a specifically mid-twentieth-century privilege, as long as he knows the tools and materials of his time.'

Another aspect of our century's privilege for Smith appears in the free play of subconscious imagery he seems to have taken for granted. The human form can be found in many abstract guises, even in works as geometrically abstract as the 'Cubi' and 'Plane' series, and anatomical references (to brain, heart, viscera, etc.) appear in many of the early works, such as *Head as Still Life, Blackburn—Song of an Irish Blacksmith,* and the odalisque-like *Leda* (Cat. Nos. 4, 9 and 5).

The last works of David Smith bring to startling new fruition a number of plastic ideas he had pursued with enormous variation over the years. The 'Voltri-Bolton' series brings to a new height of inventiveness the combination of found and manufactured forms with his created ones, and presents a clearer vision than ever before of the possibilities of these materials. The 'Cubi' series presents the stainless steel volumes balancing one on another, signalling like semaphores, climbing into the air with the seeming effortlessness and spontaneity of a masterful drawing, while retaining the sobriety of their daring defiance of gravity, a concept the meaning of which Smith had pondered often during his career both as challenge and limitation. And in the 'Zig' series Smith reached the peak of his effort to create monumental painted sculptures in which colour becomes an organic resonance of the forms, to make sculptures which *must be* painted for their full realization. They are among his most unique accomplishments, majestic in their scale and authority, revelatory in the aspects of plane, line and volume, which the colours enforce, outspoken in the originality and virility which they proclaim as prime values in art, yet unpretentious in the simplicity and eagerness of their expression.

A suitable epitaph for this great artist might be the words he spoke of himself a year before his death in an interview with the critic Thomas B. Hess: 'You know who I am and what I stand for. I have no allegiance, but I stand, and I know what challenge is, and I challenge everything and everybody. And I think that is what every artist has to do. The minute you show a work, you challenge every other artist. And you have to work very hard, especially here. We don't have the introduction that European artists have. We're challenging the world . . . I'm going to work to the best of my ability to the day I die, challenging what's given to me.' (bibl. 16)

21 Twenty-five Planes 1958 h. 11'8"



23 Bouquet of Concaves 1959 w. 38"

24 Albany VIII 1960 h. 26½"

Chronology by William Berkson

1906
David Roland Smith born in Decatur, Indiana, on March 9. His father, Harvey Martin Smith, was a telephone engineer and part-time inventor; his mother, Golda (née Stoler), a schoolteacher.

1911
Sister Catherine, born April 7 in Decatur.

1921
Family moves to Paulding, Ohio, where father becomes manager and part owner of the Paulding Telephone Company. Smith attends Paulding High School.

1923
Takes correspondence course from Cleveland Art School, Ohio. Official artist for high school yearbook.

1924
Upon graduation from high school, spends one year studying at Ohio University, Athens.

1925
Works in Studebaker plant at South Bend, Indiana, operating a riveting hammer, frame press, and milling machine, and learning other assembly-line processes of the automotive industry. Matriculates at Notre Dame University (South Bend) but leaves after two weeks because no art classes are available.

1926
Moves to Washington, D.C. Works at the Morris Plan Bank and attends evening classes in art and literature at George Washington University. Moves to New York at the end of the year. Takes an apartment at 417 West 118th Street; another apartment in the same building is occupied by the painter Dorothy Dehner, who convinces him to study at the Art Students League. Works for a finance company and attends Richard Lahey's night classes at the Art Students League. Paints in a manner influenced by Impressionism.

1927
Full-time painting student at the League until 1932. Studies with John Sloan—from whom he 'got anarchy and cubes' (bibl. 11)—and with the Czech abstract painter Jan Matulka. Returns briefly to Paulding. Marries Dorothy Dehner on December 24. They move to Greenwich Village.

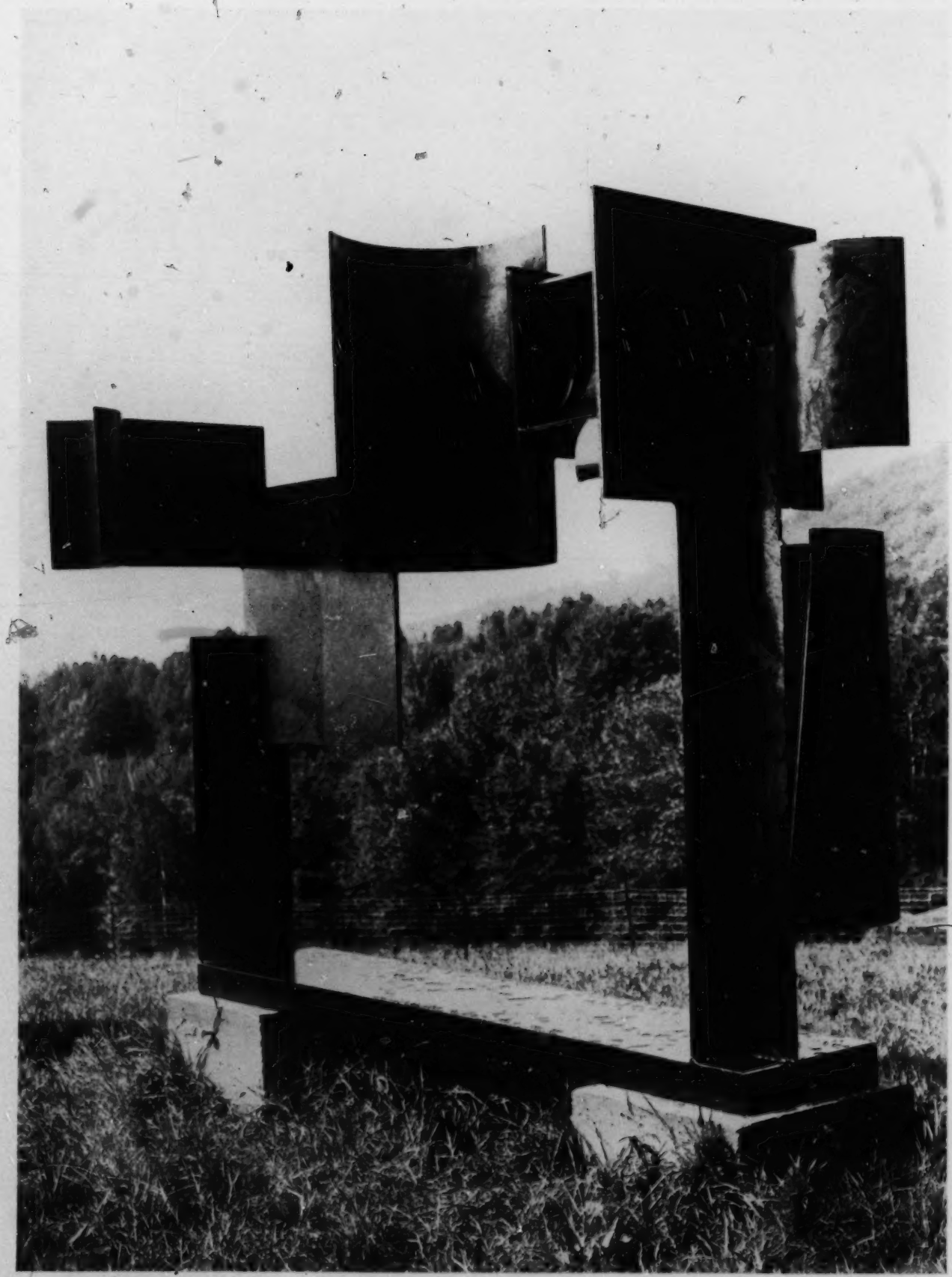
1928
Trip to California to visit his wife's aunt. Upon their return, they take a new apartment in Brooklyn. When Matulka leaves the League, Smith continues (until 1929) to study with him in private studio classes in a loft on 14th Street; he introduces Smith to the works of Mondrian, Picasso, Kandinsky, and the Russian Constructivists. During the next few years, Smith works at odd jobs—taxi driver, ordinary seaman, carpenter, salesman—studying and painting in off hours.

1929
Visits the painters Thomas Furlong and his wife, Weber (then Executive Secretary of the Art Students League), as paying guest at their farm in Bolton Landing, New York. In the summer, buys farm property (including a dilapidated colonial house) in Bolton Landing. Paints in an abstract-surrealist style.

1930
Introduced by Furlong to the Russian expatriate painter and theorist John Graham, who in turn introduces Smith to Stuart Davis, Jean Xceron, Arshile Gorky, and Willem de Kooning. 'In the beginning thirties we drank coffee and hung around together in New York like expatriates. Graham lived summers at Bolton Landing. His annual trips to Paris kept us all appraised of abstract events, along with *Cahiers d'Art* and *Transition*'. (bibl. 11) Impressed by reproductions in *Cahiers d'Art* of Picasso's welded steel sculptures of 1928-29 and also those of Picasso's collaborator, Gonzalez.

1931
Begins to attach 'found' and shaped wooden objects and other materials to the surfaces of his paintings. From October to June, visits the Virgin Islands where he makes his first sculpture, a female figure in coral. Experiments with constructions incorporating coral forms with free-standing painted wood constructions. Becomes friendly with the abstract painter, Edgar Levy.

1932
Makes a series of 'abstract photographs' of objects. Begins making welded steel sculptures influenced by Picasso, Gonzalez, and the Russian Constructivists. Other influences of the next few years include Laurens, Zadkine, and Lipchitz—but, as he later wrote, 'My sculpture grew from painting. My analogy and reference is with colour. Flash reference and afterimage vision is historied in



painting . . . In these early days it was Cubist talk. Theirs I suppose was the Cubist canvas, and my reference image was the Cubist construction. The lines then had not been drawn by the pedants—in Cubist talk, Mondrian and Kandinsky were included'. (bibl. 11) Work hampered by lack of money for equipment and materials and by impossibility of welding in apartments because of fire hazards. First exhibited work: *Landscape*, a painting shown in the window of the A.C.A. Gallery, New York.

1933

Welds the first of a series of three *Heads* which may have been the first painted steel sculptures made in the United States.

1934

Paintings and drawings included in group show at Ferargil Gallery, New York. Assigned to the Section of Fine Arts of the U.S. Government Treasury Relief Project (established the previous year by a grant from the Civil Works Administration). Graham gives Smith a Gonzalez sculpture—*Head* (*c.* 1927)—one of three the former bought in 1928. Sees Pablo Gargallo's welded sculptures at the Brummer Gallery, New York. Two *Heads* shown in the winter exhibition of the Academy of Allied Arts, New York. Exhibits the first of this series along with wood and iron sculptures in a group show at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York, in the spring. During a walk with his wife, discovers the Brooklyn Terminal Iron Works, Boiler-Tube Makers and Ship-Deck Fitters Inc., a large shed on the Brooklyn water front. Smith persuades the owners, Buckhorn and Blackburn, to rent him working space and use of the forge. This becomes his main studio until 1940. (Later he was to create *Blackburn, Song of an Irish Blacksmith*, 1950 (Cat. No. 9), in honour of Blackburn).

1935

Becomes a member—with Gorky, Graham, de Kooning, Edgar Levy, and Mischa Resnikoff—of a group which notifies the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, that they would exhibit in the forthcoming exhibition 'Abstract Art in America' only if all were invited. 'Some of us were invited and refused. Gorky and Davis did show. When I asked Gorky about it, he said someone else owned his picture and sent it . . . we really had no unity'. First trip to Europe: In October, the Smiths travel to Paris, where Graham introduces them to the Parisian art world. They spend the winter in Greece, visit Crete, and then go to London, from where they embark on a 28-day tour of the U.S.S.R. They return to London and Paris. 'It was very important . . . in the early part of the 'thirties we were all looking for a kind of Utopian position where somebody liked our work. At that time none of us could show any place. And the one thing I learned . . . I realized that I belonged here, my work was here, and whatever I could do had to be done here. I certainly gave up any idea of ever being an expatriate, so I laid into my work very hard'. (bibl. 15)

1936

Returns to United States on July 4. Concentrates primarily on gas-welded sculpture. Makes first modelled wax pieces for single bronze castings. Mentioned in Graham's book *System and Dialectics of Art*. Spends this and the following three summers at his house in Bolton Landing.

1937

Reassigned from the Treasury Relief Project to the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration. Begins first of 15 *Medals for Dishonour* (not included in exhibition), using dentists' and jewellers' tools. 'I had strong social feelings. I do now. And about the only time I was ever able to express them in my work was when I made a series of medallions which were against the peril or evils of war, against inhuman things . . . When I was in the British Museum in 1936 I bought a series of postcards which were made during the First World War, war medallions of the Germans. Those, and Sumerian cylinder seals that I had been studying in Greece, and intaglio carving, impelled me to do that series of medallions, which took me three years. I first had to learn how to carve in order to make them. It was about the only thing I have ever done which contributed with my work to a social protest. I don't feel I have to protest with my work. Whatever society I belong to must take me for my ability. My effort is to drive to the fullest extent those few talents that were given me; and propaganda is not my forte'. (bibl. 15)

First sale: sculpture bought for $8 by Herman Schumlin, a lawyer, at an auction for the benefit of Loyalist Spain.

Marian Willard, whose East River Gallery had opened the previous year, visits Smith's studios at the Terminal Iron Works. Willard agrees to give Smith a one-man show the following year.

27 Zig III 1961 w. 8'2"

1938

First one-man show—of 17 sculptures in welded iron (1935-38) and a number of drawings—opens at the East River Gallery, New York (January 19). Exhibits in the Second Annual Membership Exhibition of the American Artists' Congress, Inc., New York. *Suspended Cube. Leda* (Cat. No. 5).

1939

Makes first arc-welded sculptures, among then *Structure of Arches.* Exhibits: University Gallery, Minneapolis; United American Sculptors Exhibition, New York; Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; American Abstract Artists Exhibition, Riverside Museum, New York. Father dies, August 4. Smith makes bronze plaque for headstone. Marian Willard buys *Bathers* (1934) and *Head Screw* (1938).

1940

One-man show at the Neumann-Willard Gallery, New York (March). The painter and critic George L. K. Morris buys *Bi-Polar Structure* (1937). Smith lectures on 'Abstract Art in America' with Stuart Davis and I. Rice Pereira at United American Artists, New York. Moves permanently to Bolton Landing and begins to build studio-workshop there. Calls the property 'Terminal Iron Works' (after the Brooklyn firm) because he found the name would facilitate his obtaining credit in the area. Works as a machinist in nearby Glens Falls.

Medals for Dishonour exhibited at the Willard Gallery, New York; Smith writes catalogue preface describing the subject matter of each.

1941

One-man shows: Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Michigan; St. Paul Gallery and School of Art, Minnesota; University Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Sculptors Guild Outdoor Exhibition, New York.

1942

Exhibits in 'Artists for Victory' at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Works (until 1944) on the 'Graveyard Shift' (midnight to 8.00 a.m.) at the American Locomotive Company, Schenectady, N.Y., assembling locomotives and M7 tanks. Lives in a three-room attic in Schenectady and returns to Bolton Landing on weekends to work on wax models for bronzes. Draws in the attic weekdays. Learns to work with marble while employed half-days at Saratoga (N.Y.) Funeral Monument Yard, Harrison and Mallory Marbleworks. Series of black-and-white drawings, including *The Italian Theme,* an indictment of Mussolini's Fascism. One-man show at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

1943

The Museum of Modern Art acquires *Head* (1938).

Included in the group exhibition 'American Sculpture of our Time', at the Willard and Buchholz galleries, New York (January). Writing of this show in *The Nation,* Clement Greenberg enthusiastically singled out Smith's *Interior:* 'If (Smith) is able to maintain the level set in the work he has already done, he has a chance of becoming the greatest of all American artists'. (bibl. 18)

One-man show of 18 sculptures and 5 drawings at the Willard Gallery (April). Exhibition with Dorothy Dehner at the Albany Institute and School of Art, N.Y. (February), in which she shows paintings and he shows sculptures. Studio-workshop at Bolton Landing completed: '18 by 36 feet of steel, glass, asbestos, concrete'; living quarters remain the original farmhouse. One-man shows: Skidmore College; Walker Art Center.

1944

Returns to full-time residence in Bolton Landing and begins again to produce large amounts of sculpture. Introduced by Dan Johnson (Marian Willard's husband) to the critic Clement Greenberg.

1945

Pillar of Sunday (Cat. No. 6), *Home of the Welder* (Cat. No. 7). Meets Jackson Pollock. Greenberg buys *Vertical Structure* (1937).

1946

Retrospective of 54 sculptures (1936-45), including 30 from 1944-45, Willard and Buchholz galleries (January). Begins 'Specter' series of sculptures.

1947

Exhibits 'Specter' series at the Willard Gallery (April) and writes three statements —'The Landscape', 'Sculpture is', 'Specters are'—for the catalogue. (Abridged versions of these published in *Possibilities I,* a review edited by Robert Motherwell and Harold Rosenberg. Retrospective exhibition circulated in United States by American Association of University Women. Exhibits sculptures and delivers lecture at Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y. Attends the First Woodstock (N.Y.) Art Conference (August) at the invitation of the painter

.26 Zig IV 1961 h. 7'11"

Herman Cherry, with whom he establishes a close friendship. Smith speaks there on 'The Sculptor's Relationship with the Museum, the Dealer and the Public'.

1948

Teaches at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N.Y. (until 1950). New house in Bolton Landing completed on the site of the old farmhouse. One-man show at Allen R. Hite Institute, University of Louisville, Ky. (December). Exhibits in Sculptors Guild Outdoor Exhibition, New York, and in 'Abstract-Surrealists' at the Art Institute of Chicago.

1949

Portrait of the Eagle's Keeper (Cat. No. 8).

Unsuccessful candidate for Justice of the Peace in Bolton Landing. Designs three prize medals in gold, silver, and bronze, for *Art News'* National Amateur Competition.

1950

Receives Fine Arts Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. Included in The Museum of Modern Art exhibition 'Carvers, Modelers, Welders. (August). One-man show at Willard Gallery (April) for which he requests that Robert Motherwell write the catalogue preface, which the latter does, having been impressed by Smith's work as early as 1940, when he had seen a *Head* in a Greenwich Village exhibition. Motherwell and Smith meet and become casual friends.

Cello Player (1946) exhibited in International Open-Air Exhibition, Middelheim Park, Antwerp.

Attends Midwestern College Art Conference at University of Louisville; lectures on 'The Teaching of Sculpture'. Between May and Christmas Day, completes nine major painted steel sculptures. Through Clement Greenberg, meets the young painter Helen Frankenthaler, who buys *Portrait of the Eagle's Keeper* and becomes a close friend.

1951

Guggenheim Fellowship renewed. Begins 'Agricola' series. *The Banquet* (Cat. No. 11), *Hudson River Landscape,* and *Australia* (Cat. No. 10). Lectures at Bennington College, Vermont. *Star Cage* (1950) exhibited in the U.S. Representation, I Bienal, São Paulo, Brazil. One-man show at Willard Gallery. Lectures at American University, Washington, D.C. Meets the painter Kenneth Noland, with whom he later establishes close friendship.

1952

Lectures on WNYC radio. One-man shows: Willard Gallery (April); Bennington College; Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.; Deerfield Academy, Mass.; Walker Art Center; Kleeman Gallery, New York. Attends Woodstock Art Conference (August), the subject that year being 'Aesthetics and the Artist'; Drs. Franz Boas and Suzanne Langer participate in the discussion. *Agricola IX.*

Divorced from Dorothy Dehner, December 24.

1953

Begins 'Tank Totem' series. *Agricola XIII* (Cat. No. 13). Teaches one semester at University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. One-man shows: University of Arkansas; Willard Gallery; Philbrook Art Centre, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Kootz Gallery, New York. Marries Jean Freas, April 6, Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Delivers lecture 'Second Thoughts on Sculpture', at Southwestern College Art Conference, University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City (May). Only professional artist present at American Federation of Arts meeting at Corning Glass Centre, Corning N.Y. (November), to discuss 'Economic Support of Art in America Today'. Six Smith sculptures included in '12 Modern American Painters and Sculptors', circulated by The Museum of Modern Art in France, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Norway. *Parallel 42.*

1954

Teaches at Indiana University, Bloomington. First daughter, Rebecca, born April 4, Glens Falls. *Hudson River Landscape* exhibited in exhibition '2 Painters/3 Sculptors' presented by The Musuem of Modern Art at the XXVII Biennale, Venice, Italy. Visits France and Italy. American delegate to UNESCO's First International Congress of Plastic Arts, Venice. One-man shows: Willard Gallery (January); Cincinnati Art Musuem, Ohio (May); San Francisco Museum of Art (June). Lectures on 'Tradition' at Columbia University, New York (June 18), and at Woodstock Art Conference (August 6).

1955

Teaches at the University of Mississippi, Oxford. Sculpts series, 'Forgings'. Con-

tinues 'Tank Totem' series. Establishes close friendship with the sculptor James Rosati. Second daughter, Candida, born August 12, Glens Falls.

1956

Writes 'Gonzalez: First Master of the Torch' for *Art News* (February). *Tank Totem V* (Cat. No. 16), *The Five Spring* (Cat. No. 17), and *History of Le Roy Borton* (Cat. No. 15). One-man show at Willard Gallery (March). Makes new series of bronze plaques (to 1957).

1957

Begins 'Sentinel' series. *O Drawing* (Cat. No. 18). Retrospective of sculpture (1932-57) at The Museum of Modern Art, selected by Sam Hunter. One-man shows, New York: Fine Arts Associates (Otto Gerson) and Widdifield Gallery. Commissioned by the Art Institute of Chicago to design their Logan Prize Medal. Establishes close friendship with Robert Motherwell.

1958

25 Planes (Cat. No. 21). One-man show in the U.S. Representation, XXIX Biennale, Venice, organized by The Museum of Modern Art. *Royal Bird* (1947-48), included in 'Contemporary American Sculpture', U.S. Pavilion, Brussels World's Fair (April-October).

1959

Begins 'Albany' series. *Bouquet of Concaves* (Cat. No. 23). One-man shows: paintings and drawings, French & Co., New York; 25 sculptures, U.S. Representation, V Bienal, São Paulo; drawings, New Gallery, Bennington College. Included in II Documenta, Kassel, Germany.

1960

Tank Totem IX, 4 Units Unequal (Cat. No. 25). Special issue of *Arts* magazine devoted to Smith's work, with a long essay by Hilton Kramer (February). Small retrospective of sculpture and drawings (1956-66) at Everett Ellin Gallery, Los Angeles. Begins 'Zig' series. Between 1960 and 1962, makes series of bronzes in the lost wax process.

1961

Zig IV (Cat. No. 28). One-man show at Pittsburgh International, Carnegie Institute; *Zig IV* wins third prize ($1000), which Smith refuses on the grounds that he is 'opposed to the system of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes. I hope Carnegie Institute will apply the $1000 toward an art purchase for the museum'.

One-man shows: Otto Gerson Gallery, New York; 50 sculptures (1933-57), circulated in the United States by The Museum of Modern Art (through February 1963).

1962

Invited by Gian-Carlo Menotti and the Italian government to spend a month in Italy and while there to make a sculpture for exhibition in Spoleto during the Fourth Festival of Two Worlds. Taking over the Italsider factory in Voltri, he makes 26 sculptures in 30 days. These and other sculptures displayed in the Roman amphitheatre in Spoleto (June-July). Has old tools and machine parts shipped from Italy to Bolton, and out of these makes the 'Voltri-Bolton', 'V.B.', and 'Voltron' series (1962-63) of sculptures.

1963

Tower I (Cat. No. 34). Begins 'Cubi' series of stainless steel sculptures.

Cubi I (Cat. No. 29), completed March 4. Series of small painted steel sculptures, 'Menands', done in September-October. One-man show of drawings (1953-60) at Balin-Traube Gallery, New York (May). *Cubi IX* included in exhibition 'Sculpture in the Open Air', Battersea Park, London (May-September). Acquainted with the British sculptor Anthony Caro, teaching at the time at Bennington. Retrospective of 50 drawings (1952-63) circulated by The Museum of Modern Art in the United States and Canada.

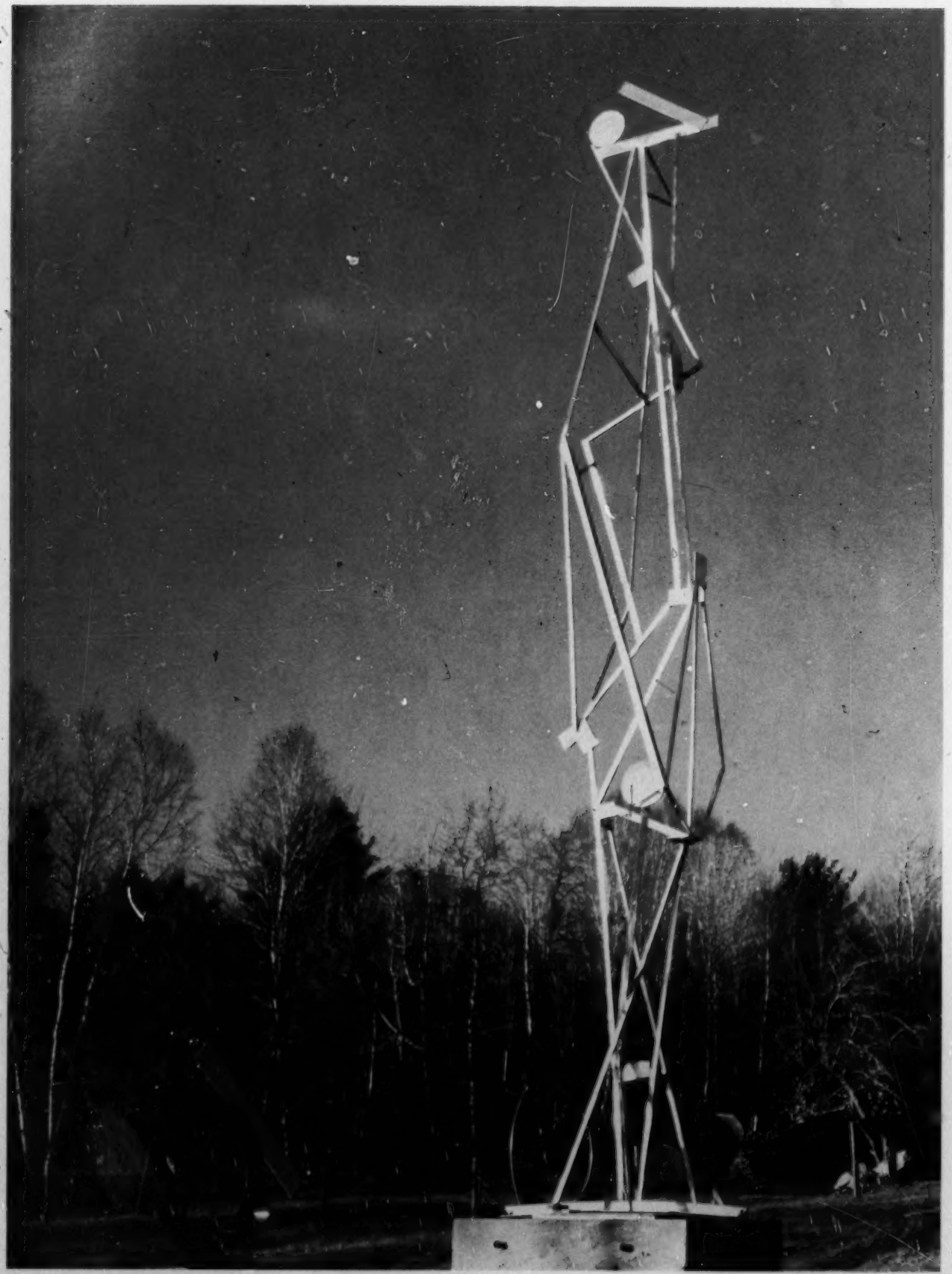
1964

'Voltron' series shown at Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Continues 'Cubi' and 'Zig' series. One-man show of 29 sculptures at Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York (October). Receives Creative Arts Award from Brandeis University. Programme on WNDT-TV's 'Art New York' series devoted to 'David Smith: Welding Master of Bolton Landing', with Frank O'Hara and Smith discussing the latter's work. Makes two huge *Wagons*. Completes in a matter of months '130 or 140' paintings of nude models. Included in III Documenta, Kassel.

1965

Cubi XXVI (Cat. No. 49), dated January 12, perhaps last completed sculpture. Appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the National Council on the Arts (February). Killed in an automobile crash near Bennington on May 23. Funeral

32 Voltri XIX 1962 h. 55"



services held on May 27 at Bolton Landing Park. Speakers include Stanley Young, of the National Council on the Arts (representing President Johnson), Robert Motherwell, James Rosati. The Reverend Arthur W. Curren, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Bolton Landing, gives invocation and recites the committal prayers. Smith's will names as executors of his estate Ira M. Lowe (his lawyer), Robert Motherwell, and Clement Greenberg.

36 Menand IV 1963 w. 23"

Catalogue

The largest dimension is given in inches, or feet and inches, and centimetres. Those works marked with an asterisk are reproduced.

1 Agricola Head 1933
Painted steel, height 18⅜/46.7
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

2 Chain Head 1933
Painted steel, height 18½/47
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

3*Saw Head 1933
Painted steel, height 17⅛/43.5
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

4 Head as Still Life 1936
Steel and bronze, width 17½/44.5
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

5*Leda 1938
Steel, height 28½/72.4
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Douglass Crockwell, Glen Falls, New York

6*Pillar of Sunday 1945
Painted steel, height 30⅞/78.4
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

7 Home of The Welder 1945
Bronze, height 21/53.3
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

8 Portrait of The Eagle's Keeper 1948–49
Bronze, height 39¼/99.5
Collection Helen Frankenthaler Motherwell, New York

9 Blackburn—Song of an Irish Blacksmith 1949–50
Steel and bronze, height 46¼/117.5
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

10*Australia 1951
Painted steel, width 9'2/280
Collection Professor William Rubin, New York

11 The Banquet 1951
Painted steel, width 6'10/208
Collection Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York

12 Agricola IX 1952
Steel, width 55½/141
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

13*Agricola XIII 1953
Steel, width 41⅞/106.3
Collection Dr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Kahn, New York

14 Parallel 42 1953
Painted steel, hanging, height: 52/132
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

15*History of Le Roy Borton 1956
Steel, height 7'4/224
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon S. Guggenheim Fund

16 Tank Totem V 1956
Steel, height 8'/244
Collection Howard and Jean Lipman, Cannondale, Connecticut

17 The Five Spring 1956
Steel, height 6'5/196
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

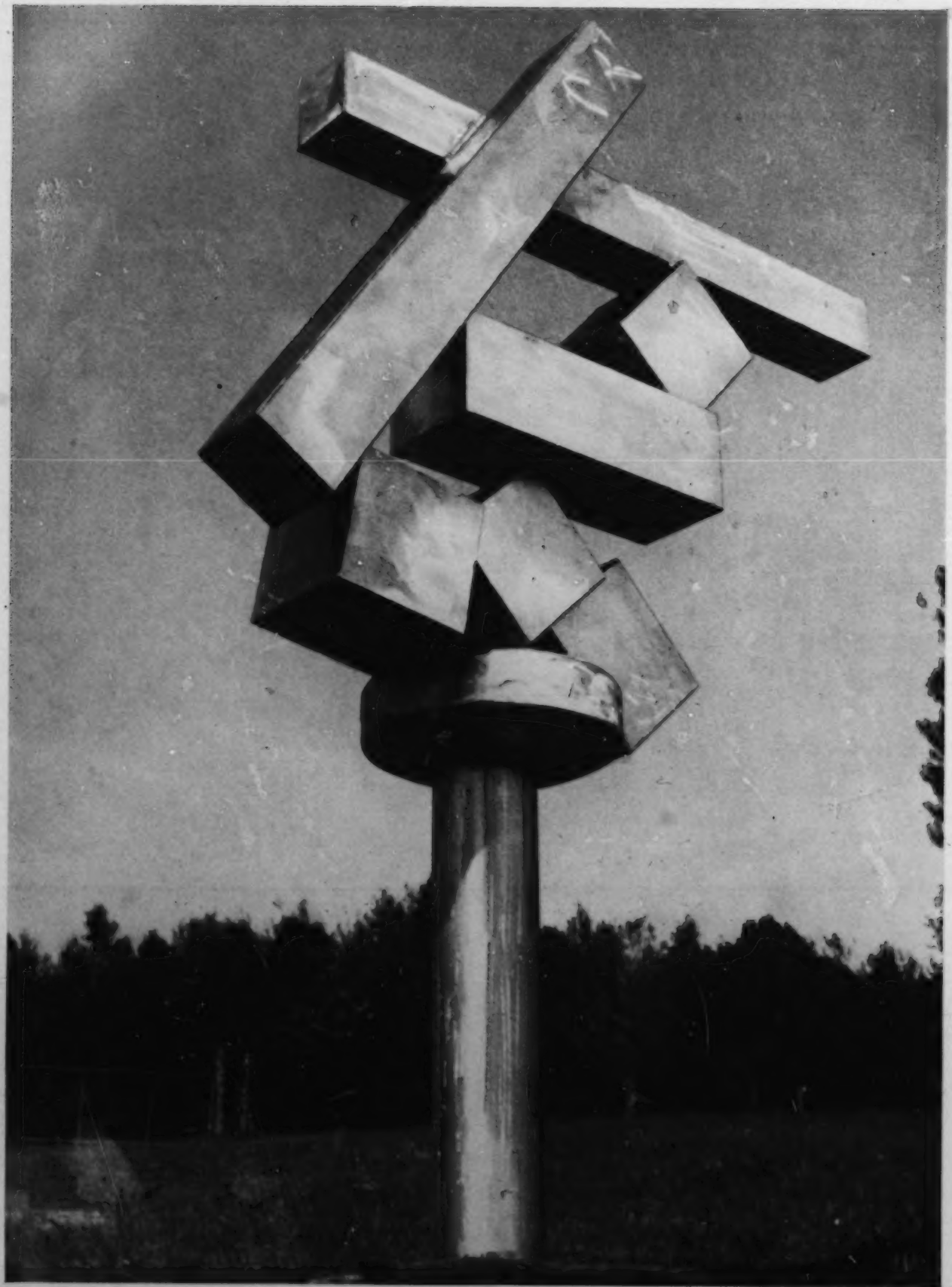
18 O Drawing 1957
Bronze, width 50⅜/128
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

19*Raven IV 1957
Painted steel, width 32¾/83.1
The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Collection

20 Sentinel III 1957
Painted steel, height 7'/213
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

21*Twenty-five Planes 1958
Stainless steel, height 11'8/356
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

22 Albany V 1959
Painted steel, height 23⅛/58.8
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York



23*Bouquet of Concaves 1959
Painted steel, width 38/96.5
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Gifford Phillips, Santa Monica, California

24*Albany VIII 1960
Painted steel, height 26½/67.3
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

25 Four units unequal 1960
Stainless steel, height 72/183
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

26 Sentinel 1961
Stainless steel, height 7'2/219
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph S. Iseman, New York

27*Zig III 1961
Painted steel, width 8'2/250
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon S. Guggenheim Fund.

28*Zig IV 1961
Painted steel, height 7'11/241.5
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

29 Cubi I 1963
Stainless steel, height 9'9/297
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

30*Voltri VII 1962
Steel, width 10'/305
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

31 Voltri VIII 1962
Steel, height 6'8/203.2
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

32*Voltri XIX 1962
Steel, height 55/139.7
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

33 Voltri-Bolton I 1962
Steel, height 9'7/292
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

34*Tower I 1962–63
Stainless steel, height 21'/640
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

35 Menand III 1963
Painted steel, height 25½/64.6
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

36*Menand IV 1963
Painted steel, width 23/58.2
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

37 Voltron XVIII 1963
Steel, height 9'3/282
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

38 VB XXII 1963
Steel, height 8'4/253.2
Collection Mr. and Mrs. David N. Pincus, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

39 Cubi XIII 1963
Stainless steel, height 9'6/290
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

40 VB XXIII 1963
Steel, height 69½/175.8
Collection Miss Sarah Dora Greenberg, New York

41*Cubi XVIII 1964
Stainless steel, height 9'7/292
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

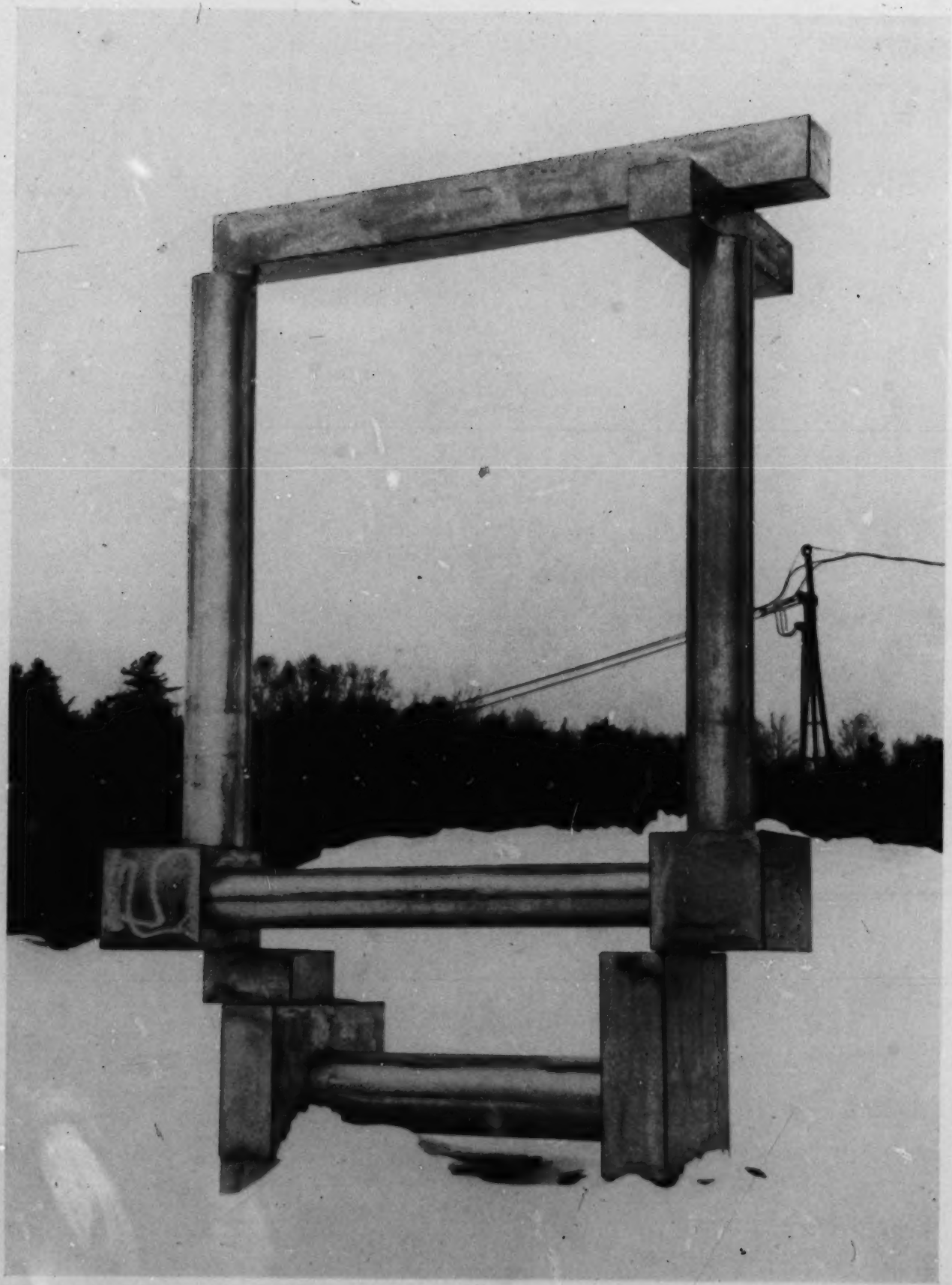
42 Cubi XXIII 1964
Stainless steel, width 14'6/439
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

43*Cubi XIX 1964
Stainless steel, height 9'5/287
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

44*Cubi XXIV 1964
Stainless steel, height 9'6/290
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

45*Bronze Planes March 9, 1964
Bronze, width 25½/64.6
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

41 Cubi XVIII 1964 h. 9'7"



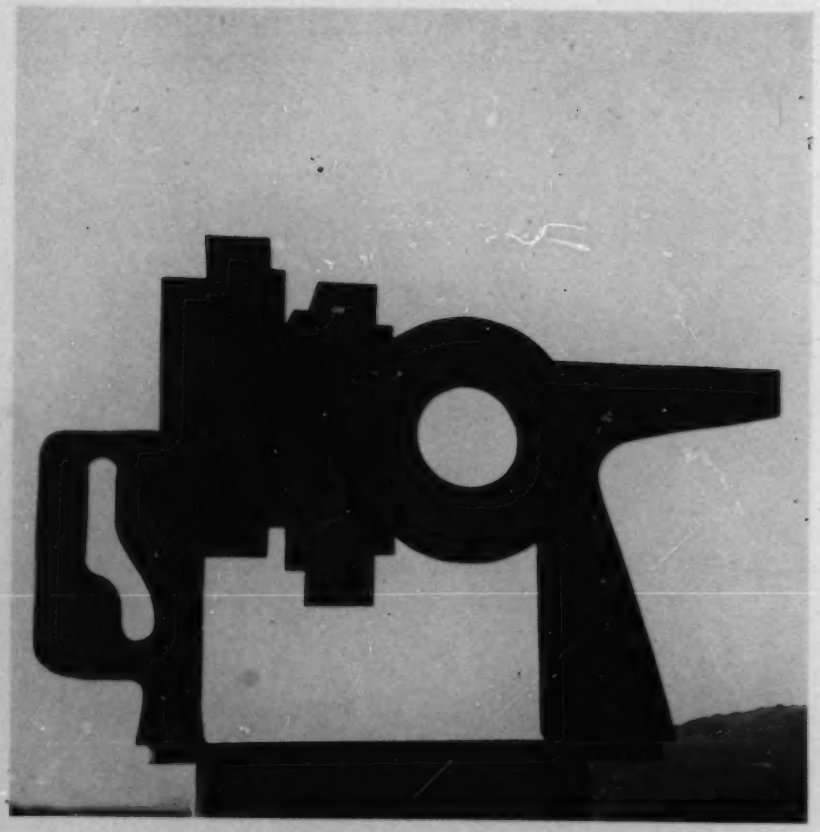
46 Bronze planes May 7, 1964
Bronze, height 21⅝/54.7
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

47 Wagon I 1964
Painted steel, length 7'3/222.5
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

48*Zig VIII 1964
Painted steel, height 8'5/256.5
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

49*Cubi XXVI 1965
Stainless steel, width 11'6/351.5
Estate of the artist, courtesy Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York

44 Cubi XXIV 1964 h. 9'6"



45 Bronze Planes 1964 w. 25½"

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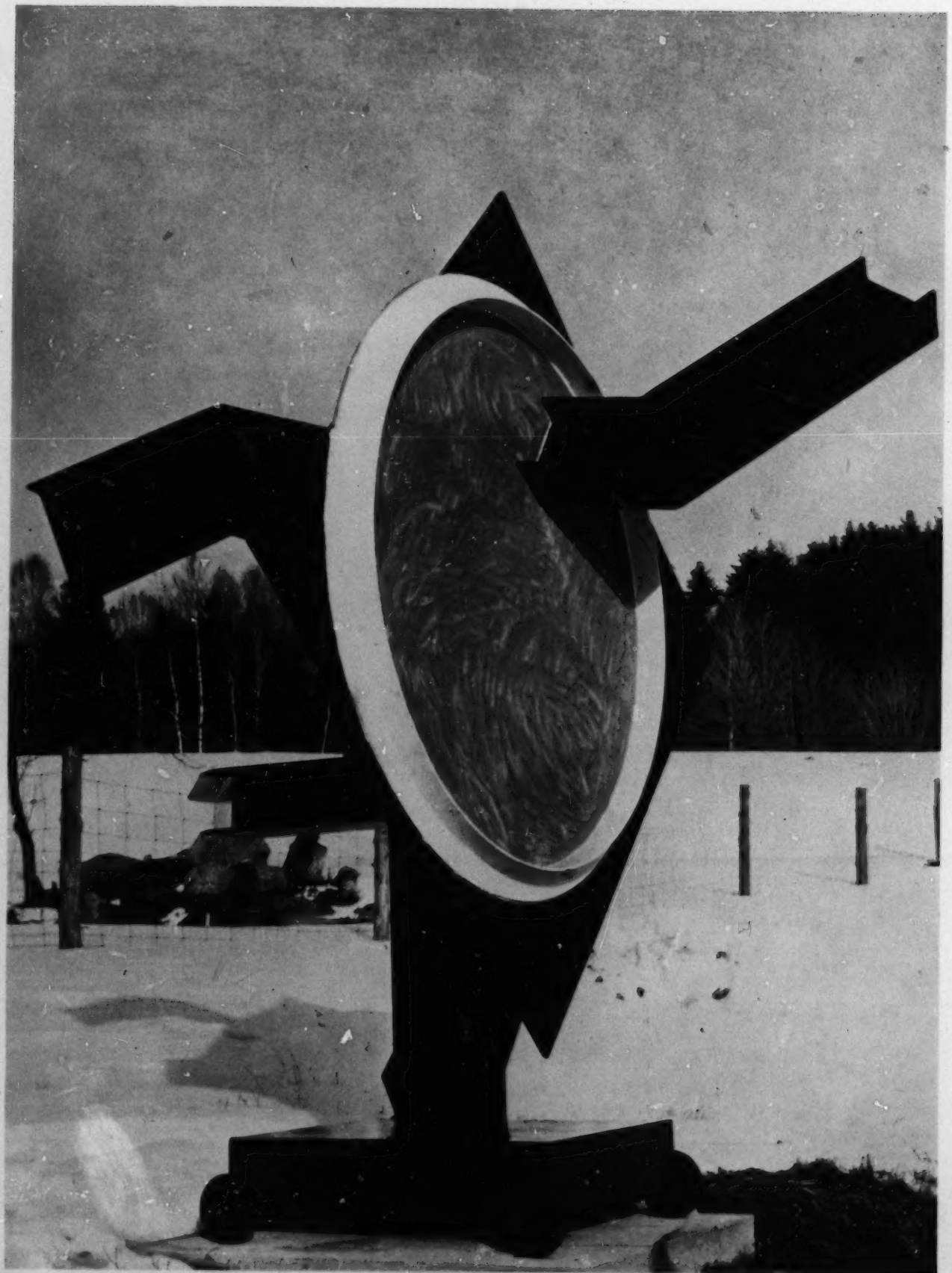

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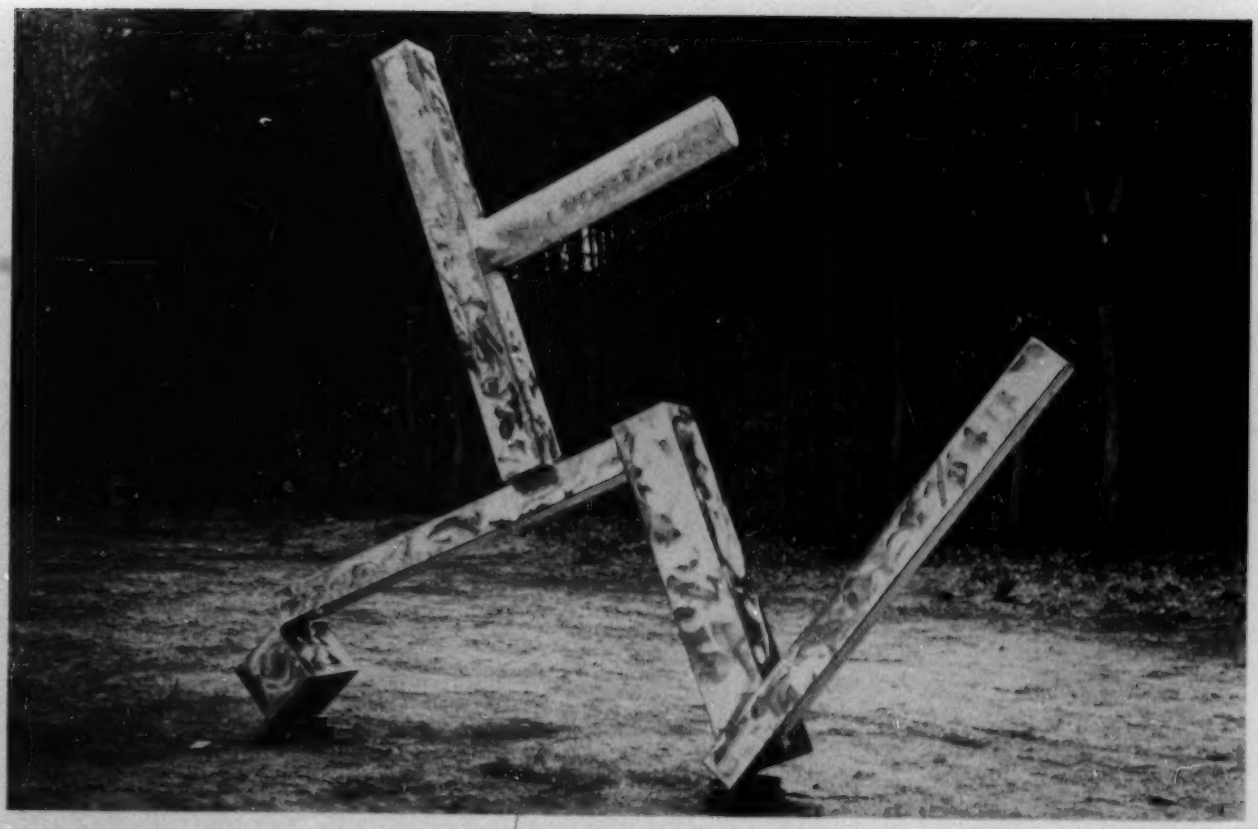

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